

A RESOLUTION to continue the special joint committee created by House Joint Resolution No. 428 of the 98th General Assembly to study and to coordinate implementation of the executive branch's strategies to solve the many problems associated with the drainage of streams and rivers and the preservation of wetlands in West Tennessee.

WHEREAS, there exists a multitude of serious problems inhibiting the effective and environmentally safe drainage of many streams and rivers in west Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, in response to the numerous drainage problems confronting West Tennessee, Governor McWherter created an Interagency Wetlands Committee composed of public agency and private sector representation to advise him on the development of appropriate policies relative to wetlands; and

WHEREAS, the Interagency Wetlands Committee has developed a draft Tennessee Wetlands Conservation Strategy that provides guidelines for effective wetland management and restoration and identifies critical tasks which need to be completed by various agencies; this strategy was endorsed by the Governor in 1994; and

WHEREAS, the Tennessee Wetlands Conservation Strategy, which is non-regulatory and results oriented, is characterized by the following components:

- (1) emphasizes data and information development;
- (2) promotes acquisition of unique wetlands;
- (3) targets wetland restoration and sets goals;
- (4) establishes "no net loss" goal for the state;

- (5) seeks increases in wetlands benefits on private land;
- (6) encourages public education; and
- (7) implements regulatory improvements; and

WHEREAS, in addition to drafting this “blueprint” to guide state policy and spending relative to wetlands restoration, the Interagency Wetlands Committee has accomplished a great deal more, including:

- (1) securing \$688,514 in federal grants since 1990;
- (2) establishing an active program to computerize soil surveys and state wetlands inventories;
- (3) completing four (4) technical studies;
- (4) conducting two (2) research projects to make existing regulatory actions more objective and fair; and
- (5) targeting wetlands restoration projects; and

WHEREAS, Governor McWherter also established the West Tennessee Tributaries Steering Committee to address issues and develop workable solutions to the numerous problems inhibiting the effective and environmentally safe drainage of West Tennessee’s streams and rivers; and

WHEREAS, the West Tennessee Tributaries Steering Committee has drafted and proposed a conceptual plan to identify those measures which need to be taken to ensure the responsible stewardship of West Tennessee’s streams and rivers; and

WHEREAS, after establishing the basic “building blocks” of the conceptual plan, the Steering Committee has moved forward to develop separate and distinct restoration plans for implementation in “critical subwatersheds” throughout the Obion and Forked Deer Basins; and

WHEREAS, a stream restoration project involving mainstream river work has been selected by the Steering Committee; the demonstration reach extends on the Middle Fork of the

Forked Deer River from the State Route 54 crossing near Quincy in Crockett County, to the confluence with the North Fork in the eastern edge of Dyer County; and

WHEREAS, this demonstration reach project will include a plan for basin monitoring, a component of the West Tennessee Tributaries Project that is essential to maintaining trust and consensus among the many interests and organizations involved; and

WHEREAS, House Joint Resolution No. 428 of the 98th General Assembly created a special joint committee to provide the necessary leadership to implement the Governor's advisory committees' recommendations and strategies relative to the effective and environmentally safe drainage of streams and rivers and the preservation and restoration of wetlands in West Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, although the special joint committee has worked assiduously at its appointed task, the two environmental issues that are subject of this study are extremely complex, and the proposed solutions to the problems confronting the West Tennessee Tributaries Project and the Interagency Wetlands Committee are indeed worthy of ongoing, exhaustive study; and

WHEREAS, it is in the best interests of the people of Tennessee for the mandate of this special joint committee to be extended; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NINETY-NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, That the special joint committee created by HJR No. 428 of the 98th General Assembly to study the drainage of streams and rivers and the restoration of wetlands in West Tennessee is hereby continued for a period of one (1) year.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the special joint committee shall continue its mandate to:

(1) facilitate implementation of the Tennessee Wetlands Conservation Strategy, developed in concert with the Tennessee Farm Bureau and Department of Agriculture;

(2) facilitate completion of the West Tennessee Tributaries Project as developed by the West Tennessee Tributaries Steering Committee;

(3) address funding needs and develop funding mechanisms for the in-lieu-of-tax payments to local governments associated with the wetlands acquisition program;

(4) investigate the feasibility and advisability of the state purchasing "Swamped out" farm land at above fair market value through the auspices of the state's wetland acquisition fund;

(5) propose legislative initiatives to assist in bringing about solutions to the numerous problems associated with the drainage of rivers and streams and the preservation and restoration of wetlands in West Tennessee; and

(6) study the operations and make recommendations relative to the Hatchie River Maintenance Crew and the Obion Forked Deer Basin Authority.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the membership of the committee shall remain as constituted by HJR No. 428 of the 98th General Assembly; provided, that the members thereof are duly elected members of the 99th General Assembly. Vacancies shall be filled by the respective Speakers.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the special joint committee shall make an interim report to the 99th General Assembly no later than April 1, 1995. The special joint committee shall report its final findings and recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the 99th General Assembly no later than February 1, 1996, at which time the committee shall cease to exist.

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